

Comments on Emergency Responder Training
for
Proposed Radiological Material Transport

Chief William Ruting

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Thank you for allowing me to address these hearings, and to have my statements entered into the record. I am William Ruting, a resident of Lyons, Illinois, and am currently the Fire Chief in the Village of La Grange, Illinois.

Let me also state for the record, that the opinions I express here do not necessarily represent those of my employer or any specific group, but are only my own, which I express as a fire chief and thirty year veteran of the fire service.

- 1 First, it is important to say that I believe there are some here today who will knowingly provide false or misleading information in an attempt to gain personal attention or to forward hidden or personal agenda. These individuals and groups present information which serves only to confuse fact and to play upon the fears of others. Further, by using exaggerated "worst-case" scenarios, they create unnecessary public concern, cause unnecessary concern for emergency responders, and seek to derail a program which serve the greater good of all. I have seen how, in recent years, similar groups have caused unnecessary alarm over shipments of other hazardous materials, which resulted in unnecessary costs passed on to taxpayers.

I have, as I stated previously, been serving in the fire service for almost thirty years, including many years as a hazardous materials responder and officer. Over the last five years I have been involved with the Transportation External Coordination Working Group, a group comprised of stakeholders representing police, fire, EMS, tribal, state and local agencies, funded by the Department of Energy and tasked with addressing concerns and issues associated with the nuclear waste consolidation efforts. Specifically, I am a member of the Training Topics Group, assigned the development of radioactive material specific emergency response training for emergency personnel along the transportation corridors identified for this program. In the last two years we have finished the first edition of a modular training program - called the Modular Emergency Response Radiological Transportation Training (MERRTT.) I believe this program, which was developed under the Transportation Emergency Preparedness Program (TEPP), with significant input from emergency response agencies, groups and individuals, represents the best training program of its type that yet been developed. It will provide emergency responders with capability specific, all level, comprehensive and accurate information for dealing with any accident which may occur in the shipping of radioactive materials to Yucca Mountain.

2... Prior to my involvement with this group, I also had serious concerns and reservations over the shipment of radioactive materials. I now admit that much of that concern was a result of a lack of knowledge and information. Having been involved in this program, and having heard first-hand the reports and discussions regarding RAM transportation, I now find that I no longer harbor such sentiments. I strongly believe that radioactive materials can be shipped safely, and that such transportation poses no significant risk to any population, including emergency responders, provided basic measures are taken to insure this safety. These measures have been previously addressed by Chief Gordon Veerman, speaking on behalf of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, at the St. Louis hearings. It is my opinion that the effort to consolidate nuclear waste into a single repository is appropriate, and that it will provide a greater level of safety, not only for emergency workers, but for the general population. I further believe that many other hazardous materials, routinely shipped in large quantities, pose greater risks to the public than do radioactive materials, and would suggest that statistical information on hazardous materials accidents support this belief.

Other than the concerns addressed by Chief Veerman, the only reservation which I currently have is over the funding for the distribution of the training materials - specifically the MERRTT program - which have been developed. I believe that the U. S. D. O. E. must provide the funding required to insure that every agency and responder along RAM transportation corridors has full access to these programs at no cost to the local jurisdiction, and that such access be addressed in a proactive manner, and not passively. Having assisted in the development of this program, I would find it a great disservice to the many who serve in fire, police, EMS and other emergency response groups if these materials did not reach them for a lack of support and funding.

To achieve this, I urge the following steps be taken:

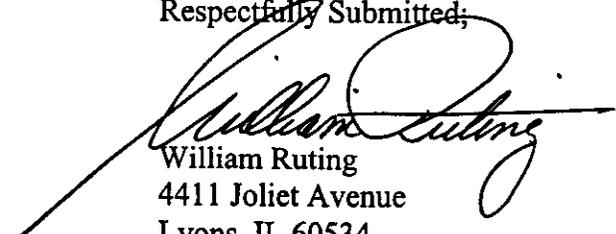
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- Route analysis should include identifying the emergency response agencies having jurisdiction for each segment of the planned routes.
 - That once identified, each agency should be provided with a copy of the training materials in their choice of hard copy and/or CD-ROM.
 - A record of the distribution of these materials should be created to allow for updated and supplemental materials to be sent as they are developed.
 - Each agency should be afforded the opportunity to have their personnel attend an instructor-led class at a location and schedule which meets local needs.
 - This training should be independent of other hazardous materials training, and no other training requirements or prerequisites should be imposed.

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- Emergency responders in areas where financial limitations pose hardships must have all training costs borne by D. O. E. funding.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to attend and to be heard.

Respectfully Submitted;



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